Primary reading

• “Jane Eyre.” By Charlotte Bronte, 1847.

Secondary reading

• “Jane Eyre and the Invention of the Self” by Karen Swallow Prior, March 3, 2016

Genres

■ fiction□ poetry□ drama■ prose
□ song□ news□ art■ speech
□ movie■ on-line information□ others

Learning focus

■ listening ■ speaking ■ reading □ writing

Handouts by

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Chapter VII

1 My first quarter at Lowood seemed an age; and not the golden age either; it comprised an irksome struggle with difficulties in habituating myself to new rules and unwonted tasks. The fear of failure in these points harassed me worse than the physical hardships of my lot; though these were no trifles.

During January, February, and part of March, the deep snows, and, after their melting, the almost impassable roads, prevented our stirring beyond the garden walls, except to go to church; but within these limits we had to pass an hour every day in the open air. Our clothing was insufficient to protect us from the severe cold: we had no boots, the snow got into our shoes and melted there: our ungloved hands became numbed and covered with chilblains, as were our feet: I remember well the distracting irritation I endured from this cause every evening, when my feet inflamed; and the torture of thrusting the swelled, raw, and stiff toes into my shoes in the morning. Then the scanty supply of food was distressing: with the keen appetites of growing children, we had scarcely sufficient to keep alive a delicate invalid.

From this deficiency of nourishment resulted an abuse, which pressed hardly on the younger pupils: whenever the famished great girls had an opportunity, they would coax or menace the little ones out of their portion. Many a time I have shared between two claimants the precious morsel of brown bread distributed at tea-time; and after relinquishing to a third half the contents of my mug of coffee, I have swallowed the remainder with an accompaniment of secret tears, forced from me by the exigency of hunger.

Sundays were dreary days in that wintry season. We had to walk two miles to Brocklebridge Church, where our patron officiated. We set out cold, we arrived at church colder: during the morning service we became almost paralysed. It was too far to return to dinner, and an allowance of cold meat and bread, in the same penurious proportion observed in our ordinary meals, was served round between the services.

At the close of the afternoon service we returned by an exposed and hilly road, where the bitter winter wind, blowing over a range of snowy summits to the north, almost flayed the skin from our faces.

I can remember Miss Temple walking lightly and rapidly along our drooping line, her plaid cloak, which the frosty wind fluttered, gathered close about her, and encouraging us, by
precept and example, to keep up our spirits, and march forward, as she said, ‘like stalwart soldiers.’ The other teachers, poor things, were generally themselves too much dejected to attempt the task of cheering others.

7 How we longed for the light and heat of a blazing fire when we got back! But, to the little ones at least, this was denied: each hearth in the schoolroom was immediately surrounded by a double row of great girls, and behind them the younger children crouched in groups, wrapping their starved arms in their pinafores.

8 A little solace came at tea-time, in the shape of a double ration of bread—a whole, instead of a half, slice—with the delicious addition of a thin scrape of butter: it was the hebdomadal treat to which we all looked forward from Sabbath to Sabbath. I generally contrived to reserve a moiety of this bounteous repast for myself; but the remainder I was invariably obliged to part with.

9 The Sunday evening was spent in repeating, by heart, the Church Catechism, and the fifth, sixth, and seventh chapters of St. Matthew; and in listening to a long sermon, read by Miss Miller, whose irrepressible yawns attested her weariness. A frequent interlude of these performances was the enactment of the part of Eutychus by some half-dozen of little girls, who, overpowered with sleep, would fall down, if not out of the third loft, yet off the fourth form, and be taken up half dead. The remedy was, to thrust them forward into the centre of the schoolroom, and oblige them to stand there till the sermon was finished. Sometimes their feet failed them, and they sank together in a heap; they were then propped up with the monitors’ high stools.

10 I have not yet alluded to the visits of Mr. Brocklehurst; and indeed that gentleman was from home during the greater part of the first month after my arrival; perhaps prolonging his stay with his friend the archdeacon: his absence was a relief to me. I need not say that I had my own reasons for dreading his coming; but come he did at last.

11 One afternoon (I had then been three weeks at Lowood), as I was sitting with a slate in my hand, puzzling over a sum in long division, my eyes, raised in abstraction to the window, caught sight of a figure just passing: I recognised almost instinctively that gaunt outline; and when, two minutes after, all the school, teachers included, rose en masse, it was not necessary for me to look up in order to ascertain whose entrance they thus greeted. A long stride measured the schoolroom, and presently beside Miss Temple, who herself had risen, stood the same black column which had frowned on me so ominously from the hearthrug of Gateshead. I now glanced sideways at this piece of architecture. Yes, I was right: it was Mr. Brocklehurst, buttoned up in a surtout, and looking longer, narrower, and more rigid than ever.

12 I had my own reasons for being dismayed at this apparition; too well I remembered the perfidious hints given by Mrs. Reed about my disposition, &c.; the promise pledged by Mr. Brocklehurst to apprise Miss Temple and the teachers of my vicious nature. All along I had been dreading the fulfilment of this promise,—I had been looking out daily for the ‘Coming
Man,’ whose information respecting my past life and conversation was to brand me as a bad child for ever: now there he was.

13 He stood at Miss Temple’s side; he was speaking low in her ear: I did not doubt he was making disclosures of my villainy; and I watched her eye with painful anxiety, expecting every moment to see its dark orb turn on me a glance of repugnance and contempt. I listened too; and as I happened to be seated quite at the top of the room, I caught most of what he said: its import relieved me from immediate apprehension.

14 ‘I suppose, Miss Temple, the thread I bought at Lowton will do; it struck me that it would be just of the quality for the calico chemises, and I sorted the needles to match. You may tell Miss Smith that I forgot to make a memorandum of the darning needles, but she shall have some papers sent in next week; and she is not, on any account, to give out more than one at a time to each pupil: if they have more, they are apt to be careless and lose them. And, O ma’am! I wish the woollen stockings were better looked to!—when I was here last, I went into the kitchen-garden and examined the clothes drying on the line; there was a quantity of black hose in a very bad state of repair: from the size of the holes in them I was sure they had not been well mended from time to time.’

15 He paused.

16 ‘Your directions shall be attended to, sir,’ said Miss Temple.

17 ‘And, ma’am,’ he continued, ‘the laundress tells me some of the girls have two clean tuckers in the week: it is too much; the rules limit them to one.’

18 Mr. Brocklehurst nodded.

19 ‘Well, for once it may pass; but please not to let the circumstance occur too often. And there is another thing which surprised me; I find, in settling accounts with the housekeeper, that a lunch, consisting of bread and cheese, has twice been served out to the girls during the past fortnight. How is this? I looked over the regulations, and I find no such meal as lunch mentioned. Who introduced this innovation? and by what authority?’

20 ‘Madam, allow me an instant. You are aware that my plan in bringing up these girls is, not to accustom them to habits of luxury and indulgence, but to render them hardy, patient, self-denying. Should any little accidental disappointment of the appetite occur, such as the spoiling of a meal, the under or the over dressing of a dish, the incident ought not to be neutralised by replacing with something more delicate the comfort lost, thus pampering the body and obviating the aim of this institution; it ought to be improved to the spiritual edification of the pupils, by encouraging them to evince fortitude under temporary privation. A brief address on those occasions would not be mistimed, wherein a judicious instructor would take the opportunity of referring to the sufferings of the primitive Christians; to the torments of martyrs; to the exhortations of our blessed Lord Himself, calling upon His disciples to take up their cross and follow Him; to His warnings that man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God; to His divine consolations, ‘If ye suffer hunger or thirst for My sake, happy are ye.’ Oh, madam, when you put bread and cheese, instead of burnt porridge, into these children’s mouths, you may indeed
feed their vile bodies, but you little think how you starve their immortal souls!’

Mr. Brocklehurst again paused—perhaps overcome by his feelings. Miss Temple had looked down when he first began to speak to her; but she now gazed straight before her, and her face, naturally pale as marble, appeared to be assuming also the coldness and fixity of that material; especially her mouth, closed as if it would have required a sculptor’s chisel to open it, and her brow settled gradually into petrified severity.

Charlotte Brontë (1816–1855)

Charlotte Brontë Biography
http://www.biography.com/people/charlotte-bronte-11919959#early-life

Charlotte Brontë was an English 19th century writer whose novel Jane Eyre is considered a classic of Western literature.

Synopsis
Born on April 21, 1816, in Thornton, Yorkshire, England, Charlotte Brontë worked as a teacher and governess before collaborating on a book of poetry with her two sisters, Emily and Anne, who were writers as well. In 1847, Brontë published the semi-autobiographical novel Jane Eyre, which was a hit and would become a literary classic. Her other novels included Shirley and Villette. She died on March 31, 1855, in Haworth, Yorkshire, England.

Early Life
Writer Charlotte Brontë was born on April 21, 1816, in Thornton, Yorkshire, England. Said to be the most dominant and ambitious of the Brontës, Charlotte was raised in a strict Anglican home by her clergyman father and a religious aunt after her mother and two eldest siblings died. She and her sister Emily attended the Clergy Daughter’s School at Cowan Bridge, but were largely educated at home. Though she tried to earn a living as both a governess and a teacher, Brontë missed her sisters and eventually returned home.

‘Jane Eyre’
A writer all her life, Brontë published her first novel, Jane Eyre, in 1847 under the manly pseudonym Currer Bell. Though controversial in its criticism of society’s treatment of impoverished women, the book was an immediate hit. She followed the success with Shirley in 1848 and Villette in 1853.

Death and Legacy
The deaths of the Bronte siblings are almost as notable as their literary legacy. Her brother, Branwell, and Emily died in 1848, and Anne died the following year.
In 1854, Charlotte married Arthur Bell Nicholls, but died the following year during her pregnancy, on March 31, 1855, in Haworth, Yorkshire, England. The first novel she ever wrote, The Professor, was published posthumously in 1857.
There was another trial of health common to all the girls. The path from Cowan Bridge to Tunstall Church, where Mr. Wilson preached, and where they all attended on the Sunday, is more than two miles in length, and goes sweeping along the rise and fall of the unsheltered country, in a way to make it a fresh and exhilarating walk in summer, but a bitter cold one in winter, especially to children whose thin blood flowed languidly in consequence of their half-starved condition. The church was not warmed, there being no means for this purpose. It stands in the midst of fields, and the damp mists must have gathered round the walls, and crept in at the windows. The girls took their cold dinner with them, and ate it between the services, in a chamber over the entrance, opening out of the former galleries. The arrangements for this day were peculiarly trying to delicate children, particularly to those who were spiritless and longing for home, as poor Maria Brontë must have been; for her ill health was increasing, and the old cough, the remains of the hooping-cough, lingered about her.

Any one may fancy how such an event as this would rankle in Charlotte's mind. I only wonder that she did not remonstrate against her father's decision to send her and Emily back to Cowan Bridge, after Maria's and Elizabeth's deaths. But frequently children are unconscious of the effect which some of their simple revelations would have in altering the opinions entertained by their friends of the persons placed around them. Besides, Charlotte's earnest vigorous mind saw, at an unusually early age, the immense importance of education, as furnishing her with tools which she had the strength and the will to wield, and she would be aware that the Cowan Bridge education was, in many points, the best that her father could provide for her.

I now come to a part of my subject which I find great difficulty in treating, because the evidence relating to it on each side is so conflicting that it seems almost impossible to arrive at the truth. Miss Brontë more than once said to me, that she should not have written what she did of Lowood in Jane Eyre, if she had thought the place would have been so immediately identified with Cowan Bridge, although there was not a word in her account of the institution but what was true at the time when she knew it; she also said that she had not considered it necessary, in a work of fiction, to state every particular with the impartiality that might be required in a court of justice, nor to seek out motives, and make allowances for human feelings, as she might have done, if dispassionately analysing the conduct of those who had the superintendence of the institution. I believe she herself would have been glad of an opportunity to correct the over-strong impression which was made upon the public mind by her vivid picture, though even she, suffering her whole life long, both in heart and body, from the consequences of what happened there, might have been apt, to the last, to take her deep belief in facts for the facts themselves - her conception of truth for the absolute truth.
Pre-reading discussion:

1. Do you know any story told in a biographical form based on a personal reflection? (You could name a film, a TV program or a novel.)

2. Do you feel encouraged by that person’s life? Which part or characteristics of the person is inspirational to you?

3. Look at the following words and phrases. The describe Jane Eyre’s school days. What do they suggest to you. Describe what you imagine life to have been like.
   - Irksome struggle
   - Harassed
   - Physical hardships
   - Insufficient clothing
   - Severe cold
   - Numbed
   - Scanty supply of food

Questions for the reading:

1. Think about the different physical situations described in the text: the life at school, the time of the year, and a friend’s illness. How are they associated with Jane’s feeling?

2. What are the similarities and differences between Cowan Bridge and Lowood? Make a list.

3. Underline the main points in Mrs. Gaskell’s argument and summarizes them in your own words.

4. What part of Charlotte Bronte’s life did Mrs. Gaskell find difficult in treating?

5. What does Mrs. Gaskell mean by saying “I believe she herself would have been glad of an opportunity to correct the over-strong impression which was made upon the public mind by her vivid picture, though even she, suffering her whole life long both in heart and body from the consequences of what happened there, might have been apt, to the last, to take her deep beliefs in facts for the facts themselves—her conception of truth for the absolute truth.”

Post-reading discussion:

- Re-read Mrs. Gaskell’s description of Charlotte Bronte as a school girl, discuss what impressions you get of her and her social surroundings?
- What general comments can you make about the times in which the story is set?
- Would you like to lived in Charlotte Bronte’s time? Why?
- Discuss your memory of school that you would rather not remember.
- Call you say any defining moment or event in your life that marks your coming of age?
Consider the selfie. By now, it’s a fairly mundane artistic tradition, even after a profusion of thinkpieces have wrestled with its rise thanks to the so-called Me Generation’s “obsession” with social media. Anyone in possession of a cheap camera phone or laptop can take a picture of themselves, edit it (or not), and share it with the world in a matter or seconds.

But before the selfie came “the self,” or the fairly modern concept of the independent “individual.” The now-ubiquitous selfie expresses in miniature the seismic conceptual shift that came about centuries ago, spurred in part by advances in printing technology and new ways of thinking in philosophy. It’s not that the self didn’t exist in pre-modern cultures: Rather, the emphasis the Protestant Reformation in the 16th century placed on personal will, conscience, and understanding—rather than tradition and authority—in matters of faith spilled over the bounds of religious experience into all of life. Perhaps the first novel to best express the modern idea of the self was *Jane Eyre*, written in 1847 by Charlotte Brontë, born 200 years ago this year.

Those who remember *Jane Eyre* solely as required reading in high-school English class likely recall most vividly its over-the-top Gothic tropes: a childhood banishment to a death-haunted room, a mysterious presence in the attic, a Byronic hero, and a cold mansion going up in flames. It’s more seemingly the stuff of Lifetime television, not revolutions. But as unbelievable as many of the events of the novel are, even today, Brontë’s biggest accomplishment wasn’t in plot devices. It was the narrative voice of Jane—who so openly expressed her desire for identity, definition, meaning, and agency—that rang powerfully true to its 19th-century audience. In fact, many early readers mistakenly believed *Jane Eyre* was a true account (in a clever marketing scheme, the novel was subtitled, “An Autobiography”), perhaps a validation of her character’s authenticity.

The way that novels paid attention to the particularities of human experience (rather than the universals of the older epics and romances) made them the ideal vehicle to shape how readers understood the modern individual. The rise of the literary form was made possible by the technology of the printing press, the print culture that followed, and the widening literacy that was cultivated for centuries until *Jane Eyre*’s publication. The novel seemed perfectly designed to tell Brontë’s first-person narrative of a destitute orphan girl searching for a secure identity—first among an unloving family, then an austere charity school, and finally with the wealthy but unattainable employer she loves. Unable to find her sense of self through others,
Jane makes the surprising decision to turn *inward*.

The broader cultural implications of the story—its insistence on the value of conscience and will—were such that one critic fretted some years after its publication that the “most alarming revolution of modern times has followed the invasion of *Jane Eyre*.” Before the Reformation and the Enlightenment that followed, before Rene Descartes’s *cogito ergo sum* (“I think, therefore I am”), when the sources of authority were external and objective, the aspects of the self so central to today’s understanding mattered little because they didn’t really affect the course of an individual’s life. The Reformation empowered believers to read and interpret the scriptures for themselves, rather than relying on the help of clergy; by extension, this seemed to give people permission to read and interpret their own interior world.

To be sure, early novelists before Brontë such as Frances Burney, Daniel Defoe, Samuel Richardson, and Mary Shelley contributed to the form’s developing art of the first-person narrator. But these authors used the contrivances of edited letters or memoirs, devices that tended toward underdeveloped characters, episodic plots, and a general sense of artificiality—even when the stories were presented not as fiction but “histories.” No earlier novelist had provided a voice so seemingly pure, so fully belonging to the character, as Brontë. She developed her art alongside her sisters, the novelists Anne and Emily (all of them publishing under gender-neutral pseudonyms), but it was Charlotte whose work best captured the sense of the modern individual. Anne Brontë’s novels *Agnes Grey* and *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* contributed to the novel’s ability to offer social commentary and criticism, while the Romantic sensibilities of Emily Brontë’s *Wuthering Heights* explored how the “other,” in the form of the dark, unpredictable Heathcliff, can threaten the integrity of the self.

One of the greatest testimonies to Brontë’s accomplishment came from Virginia Woolf, a modernist pioneer who represents a world far removed from that of Bronte’s Victorianism. “As we open *Jane Eyre* once more,” a doubting Woolf wrote in *The Common Reader*, “we cannot stifle the suspicion that we shall find her world of imagination as antiquated, mid-Victorian, and out of date as the parsonage on the moor, a place only to be visited by the curious, only preserved by the pious.” Woolf continues, “So we open *Jane Eyre*; and in two pages every doubt is swept clean from our minds.” There is nothing of the book, Woolf declares, “except Jane Eyre.” Jane’s voice is the source of the power the book has to absorb the reader completely into her world. Woolf explains how Brontë depicts:

… an overpowering personality, so that, as we say in real life, they have only to open the door to make themselves felt. There is in them some untamed ferocity perpetually at war with the accepted order of things which makes them desire to create instantly rather than to observe patiently.

It is exactly this willingness—desire, even—to be “at war with the accepted order of things” that characterizes the modern self. While we now take such a sense for granted, it was, as Brontë’s contemporaries rightly understood, radical in her day. More disturbing to Brontë’s Victorian readers than the sheer sensuality of the story and Jane’s deep passion was “the heroine’s refusal to submit to her social destiny,” as the literary critic Sandra M. Gilbert explains. Indeed, one contemporary review complained, “It is true Jane does right, and exerts great moral strength,” but the critic continues that “it is the strength of a mere heathen mind.
which is a law unto itself.” In presenting such a character, the reviewer worries, Brontë has “overthrown authority” and cultivated “rebellion.” And in a way they were right: “I resisted all the way,” Jane says as she is dragged by her cruel aunt toward banishment in the bedroom where her late uncle died. This sentence, Joyce Carol Oates argues, serves as the theme of Jane’s whole story.

But Jane’s resistance is not the empty rebellion of nihilism or self-absorption (consider how current practitioners of “selfie culture” frequently weather accusations of narcissism). Rather, her quest for her true self peels back the stiff layers of conventionality in order to discover genuine morality and faith. As Brontë explains in the preface to the novel’s second edition (a preface necessitated by the moral outrage that followed the novel’s publication),

Conventionality is not morality. Self-righteousness is not religion. To attack the first is not to assail the last … These things and deeds are diametrically opposed: they are as distinct as is vice from virtue. Men too often confound them: they should not be confounded: appearance should not be mistaken for truth; narrow human doctrines, that only tend to elate and magnify a few, should not be substituted for the world.

In a letter to a friend, Brontë responded to her critics’ objections by declaring, “Unless I have the courage to use the language of Truth in preference to the jargon of Conventionality, I ought to be silent …”

The refusal of such a woman, who lived in such a time, to be silent created a new mold for the self—one apparent not only in today’s Instagram photos, but also more importantly in the collective modern sense that a person’s inner life can allow her to effect change from the inside out.

Karen Swallow Prior

Karen Swallow Prior is a professor of English at Liberty University and a research fellow with the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention. She is the author of Booked: Literature in the Soul of Me and Fierce Convictions: The Extraordinary Life of Hannah More.

Reference

Source: <http://www.foragegathering.com/blog/2016/3/8/99k7v6ld8ru3pw2907in6ad2t3m4v>, 2016/3/11


This year, the Forage team has been focusing on influence in every aspect of life. We were honored to sit down with one of the most influential women we know for an inside scoop into her life as a
well-known professor, author and leader. It is our privilege to share this interview with Dr. Karen Prior!

1. How do you define identity?
Identity is formed and understood in community. Whereas our sense of “self” is more essential and holistic than our identity, identity is rooted in various, and sometimes changing, roles: I am a woman, a wife, a daughter, a professor, a runner, a reader, a writer, a bridge-builder, and dog lover. All of these things (and more) make up my identity, but some of these things will shift over the course of my life. The only part of my identity that is eternal and unchanging is my identity in Christ as a child of God.

2. In your experience, what role does identity play in influence?
My influence flows from all of these parts of my identity I mentioned above. Prayerfully, hopefully, it is my identity in Christ that exerts the most influence on myself and on others.

3. Can identity and influence exist apart from each other?
I don’t think they can exist apart from each other. But identity is first. Influence follows.

4. What is the greatest enemy influential people face?
I think the greatest enemy is the illusion that our identity is rooted in our influence or in our ability to see the effects of our influence. Influence is something that is impossible to measure or predict. It’s easy to think that the number of book sales or Twitter followers equates with influence. But I suspect that a one-on-one relationship I have with a student or friend will have far more effect on eternity than any of these. Because we can have influence wherever we are, whatever our life looks like at a given moment, it is a trap to root our identity in any sense we might have of the influence we wield.

5. As a prominent female, what have been some of your most unexpected challenges in gaining influence?
Being attacked and slandered by a small band of men on the internet was a surprising challenge I recently faced. I didn’t see it coming because I didn’t know these people existed, but looking back, I see now it is because I was gaining in visibility and influence in ways that threatened these individuals far beyond simply having different views. Some male colleagues who’d faced similar attacks by the same group shrugged it off more easily than I did. I think it was easier for them as men to dismiss being hassled and called names by men. I felt more vulnerable as a woman, and I think that’s natural. Yet, God did, and is still doing, an amazing work in me and in others through this unexpected challenge. I can say I’m truly thankful for the refinement in my spirit and my thinking and expression that this challenge posed to me. I’m also thankful for the grace to be able to respond in a way that ministered to other people and encouraged them. I made some new friends through all this and, ironically, gained new influence as well.

But the biggest unexpected challenge in gaining influence has been simply coming to recognize the incremental growth in my influence as it occurs and to adjust for and to accept the responsibility that comes with that increase. I still catch myself at times thinking and communicating as though it’s still just me and my classroom of English students – but it’s not. I have a much wider audience
and I have a responsibility to them that’s almost (but not quite) as great as the responsibility to my students.

6. Does influence differ or look differently for men as opposed to women? Certainly it does. I think one way it looks different is that women tend to be more relational, and I am no exception. This means that I tend to want to engage those who criticize or question me when sometimes it’s wisest for a variety of reasons to let such things go. At the same time, I think that same relational approach can be a strength as well as a weakness. My ability and willingness to connect with people in a more personal way ends up increasing my influence even further. I simply need to be wise in balancing connections with people with other needs such as privacy and stewardship of my time and mental energy.

7. What is your advice to women who have a passion to be influential in the Church and our culture? My strongest advice is to recognize that we are all already influential wherever we are. We need not get lost dreaming about the “what ifs” and the “some days” and the “whens”—you are already influencing the people around you. Be faithful in that sphere of influence first and foremost. Be excellent in all that you do first and foremost. And let God use you as He wills.

8. If you could impart wisdom to the next generation of influential women, what would you say to them? I would say start where you are. God created you in a specific time and place in human history—he placed you here and now—so begin there and see where God takes you. Your future influence will be determined by your present faithfulness.

Discussion

1. Do you like to take selfie (self-portraits)? Why are people today so obsessed with selfies?
2. Before the invention of social media, how was “the self” presented or expressed?
4. Can you summarize the development of the concept of “the self” according to this article?
5. What is so unique about the narrative voice of Jane Eyre and how does it correspond with idea of the self?
6. Does the author think a 19th-century woman’s quest for true self still speak to our current concerns about “the self”?

Class activities

1. Select one of your favorite selfies and explain why it can best express yourself.
2. Use your imagination. Think about how the concept of the self will be evolved in the future with the new technological invention.
3. Use any of your electronics devices at hand, and talk about which features may define you.